Kino no Tabi Volume1 Summary

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Kino no Tabi Volume I Summary

Prologue: In the Forest · b —Lost in the Forest · b —

(Anime Reference: Episode 12 Opening Scene)

Prologue
“In the Forest · b”
— Lost in the Forest · b —
Epilogue
“In the Forest · a”
— Lost in the Forest · a —

In the middle of pitch black darkness inside a silent forest, Kino explains to Hermes why she continues her journey despite encountering pain and tragedy time and again. And how she finds beauty amidst all the horrible things in the world.

"Sometimes I wonder whether I'm just helpless and foolish, an outright disgusting being. Every so often I would feel that I am, and at times I have no other choice but to think of myself as such. I don't really understand … But whenever I feel like that, everything else—the world, the way of life of others—seems very beautiful; they become very dear to me. And wanting to learn more about these things makes me want to continue my journey."

She adds that traveling is so much fun, and that she can stop anytime she wishes. Hermes says that he couldn 't fully comprehend Kino's line of thinking, to which Kino replies that she doesn't understand it herself either, and perhaps, continues to travel to understand more.

Chapter 1: Land of Visible Pain —I See You.—

(Anime Reference: Episode 1)

Chapter One

"Land of Visible Pain"

— I See You. —

Kino and Hermes were riding on a road in the middle of a grassland. Hermes chides Kino, who, out of dizziness from hunger, almost got them into an accident. Apparently, Kino did not eat lunch to save up her rations because they're about to arrive in a country. Hermes notes that she can't always be sure that she would be able to eat even if they do arrive in one, because the next country may be deserted.

Soon they arrive at the country's walls, which was surrounded by a moat and had a drawbridge for a gate. Kino approaches the guard post but forgets to put down Hermes' sidestand, causing him to fall over. Because she was weak of hunger, she couldn't even lift Hermes up, much to Hermes' chagrin.

There is no one in the guard post, and it is a machine that took care of the entry procedures. Inside the country, Kino first eats a meal in an unmanned restaurant, then spends most of the day looking around the country. They encountered machines that gave them maps, cleaned streets, and served food, but met not a single soul. At the end of the day, they find a hotel, where they are led to a

gorgeous room, much to Kino's confusion, as the room, like the food and the fuel she helped herself to earlier that day, is incredibly cheap.

Kino and Hermes examine the map they received, noting areas labelled as a government district, an industrial district, and a residential district. Kino remarks that there has to be someone making all the machines, and notes that the situation seems unlike the country they were in right before, where there was only one person left. She decides to check out if there are people living in the residential area the next day, and decides to sleep off the rest of the evening in the comfortable bed.

The next day, Kino wakes up at dawn and proceeds with the maintenance of her two persuaders, the slim .22 automatic 'Woodsman' and the double-action revolver ' Canon'. She practices her quick draw before enjoying her second luxurious shower and buffet breakfast. Late that morning, she wakes up Hermes and checks out of the hotel. They head for the residential district located in a forested area, where they find identical houses among the trees that didn't seem to have any people living in them. They eventually reach the western gate and head back towards the government district at the country's center and take an elevator to the top floor of a tall

building. Kino pulls out a sniper scope from her bag and observes the houses inside the forested area. To her surprise, she finds people living in them. However, every single person lived in isolation. Before heading back to the hotel they stayed in the day before, they visit the industrial district where the machines are made, but find out nothing about the country's situation from their machine guide.

The next day, Kino replenishes their supplies and heads straight towards the western gates. They pass through the forested residential area and meet no one, until they find a man tinkering with a machine in his garden. They approach the man, who leaps in surprise upon seeing them. When he has finally calmed down, he asks Kino if she could tell what he is thinking. Kino becomes perplexed but answers truthfully. The man soon realizes that Kino is a traveler, and delightfully invites her to tea.

The man guides Kino and Hermes into a large room and serves her tea. Kino inquires about the contents of the tea after sniffing and noting its strange aroma. The man replies that it's called 'dokudami'. Hermes tells Kino not to drink it, concluding that it is poisonous because of its name (Note: 'Doku' means poison in Japanese). The

man laughs and explains that it is not poison, rather an ‘ antidote’ for poison (i.e. bodily toxins). The man’s smile then changed to sobs, explaining that it was so long since he last talked to a person. Kino urges him to tell his story.

The man tells her that their country is a place where everyone feels each other’s pain—the land of visible pain, so to speak. They believed that it was a wonderful thing to understand how other people feel, for them to know when their words or deeds had hurt somebody else. Because their country was rich and all the work was done by machines, the citizens had free time to pursue the arts and sciences. One day, a group of neuroscientists discovered an untapped ability of the human brain to perceive other people’s thoughts and feelings, and created a medicine that could activate it. All of the citizens drank the medicine, partly because of faith in its merits and the belief that it is a step forward in evolution, and partly because no one wanted to be left out.

Then the man shares his own story. He and his lover lived together in bliss for a while after receiving their telepathic abilities. But one day, the man saw the woman watering his herbs, and thought that she was watering them too much even though he had already told her not to do so. Before he could explain gently, the woman

received his thoughts and was angered at the notion that he thought her an idiot. From then, things fell apart between the two of them. There was chaos elsewhere: a man killed in an accident transmitted his pain to onlookers, driving them mad; allied politicians realizing the treachery of their peers; school tests rendered useless when everyone could tell the answers from their classmates' thoughts; people getting arrested for rape or indecency just by looking at a woman, and so on.

The country was in utter disorder within a week. They all realized that no good came out of knowing each other's feelings, and that it could potentially make things worse. Having discovered that the ability doesn't work if they are apart from each other, they all volunteered to live in isolation. The man notes that the country is headed to certain collapse, with no children born in it for almost ten years. The man plays his favorite music.

"I find this piece deeply moving, I often wondered how other people felt about it. I used to listen to it together with my lover, and she told me that she loved it, but is that really how she feels? And you Kino, what do you think about it? ...But I don't want to know the answer to that."

The man sees them off, but when Kino is about to launch Hermes, he suddenly asks Kino to stay with him. Kino refuses and insists on continuing her journey. Realizing the implications of his suggestion, the man blushes and apologizes. Kino shares a gaze with him before finally setting off. On their way, Hermes accuses Kino of being "lovey-dovey" with the man (and comments on the man's 'weird' taste). Kino denies this, and says that she exchanged parting thoughts with the man during that last gaze. Hermes wonders if the message came across, but Kino herself is unsure.

Chapter 2: Land of Majority Rule —Ourselfish—

(Anime Reference: Episode 5 Part 3)

Chapter Two

"Land of Majority Rule"

— Ourselfish —

Kino and Hermes were running through a meadow. Kino speeds ahead upon noticing the white walls of a country. They soon arrive at its arched gates, stone houses visible from beyond as it is wide open. The guard post is unmanned. Hermes goads her to come in, but Kino hesitates, reasoning that the owner of a place has every right to shoot a trespasser. Hermes replies that there won't be anyone to shoot her if the place is really deserted, and anyone that tries to will get killed first anyway by Kino. When Kino agrees, Hermes suggests heading towards the country center.

Kino and Hermes find themselves spending the night beside a campfire, underneath the stars. Hermes expresses outrage at the abandonment of the splendidly built stone buildings and paved roads, in which they spent half the day probing without meeting a single person. Tired of the search, they camped out and built a fire on a small dent on the road. Kino munched on her unsavory clay-like portable rations before heading to sleep, disappointed that there is neither shower nor clean sheets waiting for her.

The next day, Kino wakes up to a misty dawn. She carries out her light exercises and the maintenance of her

persuaders before eating portable rations again for breakfast. She then wakes up Hermes and spends another half a day wandering the country. The search proves fruitless, and about noon they arrive at a large park with an enormous white building in its center. Kino and Hermes conjectures that it must be the royal palace grounds, turned into a park after the monarchy was overthrown. They explore its magnificent interior until they reach a balcony from which the courtyard could be seen. There they found countless graves.

Hermes concludes that everyone in the country is dead , and all the survivors must have abandoned it. And then he suggests to Kino that they leave, as there is nothing for them to do in a deserted country. Because it hasn't been three days yet, Kino refuses and insists that they camp for the night and leave the next morning. Hermes asks why she is so adamant about this rule. Kino answers that a traveler she met a long time ago told her that it is just the right length of stay in any place.

On the third day, Kino rises with the dawn and performs her morning routine. Kino uses a damp cloth to wash her body and eats her breakfast afterwards. Then she prepares her luggage and wakes up Hermes. They were riding unrestrained through the road until the

western walls became visible, at which point they spot a tractor loaded with vegetables and fruits. A living human slept in its driver seat. Kino and Hermes approach the man, accidentally waking him up with the sound of Hermes' engine. The man realizes that they are travelers, declares himself as the one and only citizen of the country, and welcomes his visitors, albeit being two days late. Then he offers to tell them his country's history .

The man begins by revealing that the country was once ruled by a monarchy, confirming their suspicions. Hermes quips that a revolution occurred next. From this, the man reckons that they must have seen the palace and the graves. Kino asks if they died in a plague, but he refutes this and says that only one of them died from a disease. He continues his story, saying that the country endured the leadership of many kings, most of whom were poor and unpopular rulers. Fourteen years ago, crop failure plunged the country into a crisis. There was widespread famine, but the king did nothing to appease the suffering of his starving people. And so the people started plotting a revolution. Those who were caught having involvement were executed in a traditional manner: legs and hands tied together, then hanged upside down and dropped head first into the road. They

were executed along with their families. When the time came for the revolution, the rebels first procured weapons, but found no need for them as the king ran away without a fight. He was caught trying to escape from the country with his treasures hidden among the vegetables in a farm truck.

After the revolution, the people created a new government ruled by no individual or a small group of people. The country was ruled by all of its citizens. All matters shall be decided by vote, and new ideas shall be made into law if approved by the majority. The first thing they decided on was the fate of their previous king. As expected, an overwhelming majority voted for his death. He was executed along with his family and supporters in the traditional manner. At first, everything went well. They decided on their constitution, legislation, law enforcement, taxes, educational system, and so on. But one day, some people suggested electing a person that will lead for a number of years, as counting all of the citizens' votes for every single issue proved troublesome. This was not approved by the majority, and another vote decided that the people who suggested it be executed with their families. Such 'traitors' appeared one after the other: people who wanted to abolish the death penalty, reform the tax system, etc. Soon they were running out of

graves, and decided to turn the palace courtyard into a cemetery.

Kino asks how many executions in total had occurred. The man answers 13,064, excluding the countless executions during the time of the kings. The last execution happened a year ago, when there were only three citizens left—the man, his wife, and his friend. His friend decided to leave the country, but he and his wife voted against it, leading to his death. And lastly, as he was not a doctor, he failed to save the life of his wife who died of a simple cold only half a year ago. He broke into tears from the memory.

Kino thanks him and turns to leave. The man then proposes that Kino and Hermes become citizens and rebuild the country with him. Kino and Hermes refuse. The man then proceeds to beg them to stay for a year, for a week, for three days, and finally for a day (even offering himself to Kino as a slave), all of which Kino and Hermes turn down. Finally, he pulls out a 16-round revolver from his bag. Kino asks if he plans to threaten them with it, but the man answers.

"No, no, NO! This is not right! If I use this, I wouldn't be any different from those foolish kings! It is wrong to

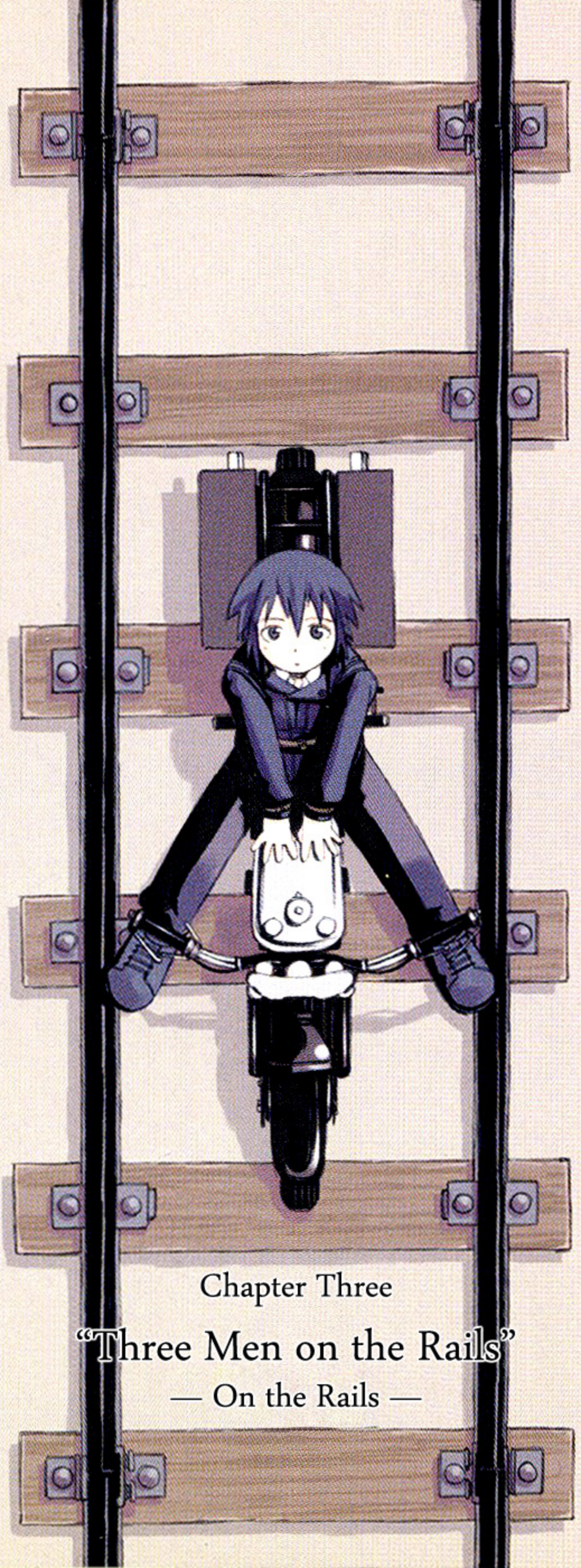
force your thinking into others using violence! Wrong I say! The way of a fool! …Yes, everything should be decided by the majority. That can be determined by voting, and the consensus will lead to a peaceful resolution. It's the sole path that humans should take, one that can never lead to a fatal mistake! I am right, ain't I?"

Afterwards, Kino asks him what he would do if she and Hermes tell him that he was mistaken. The weapon falls from his hands, and he shouts at Kino and Hermes to leave and never to return. As they ride away, Hermes whispers 'Goodbye, your majesty.' Once they're out of sight, the man screams, threatening to kill them if they ever come back.

Kino and Hermes reach a fork in the road where there should only be one. Kino chooses the right (it being wider) while Hermes votes for the left (it being firmer). Kino agrees to take the left, but realizing that they will just have to turn back if they made the wrong choice, she proceeds to the right, to Hermes' annoyance.

Chapter 3: Three Men on the Rails —On the Rails —

(Anime Reference: Episode 5 Part 1)



Chapter Three

"Three Men on the Rails"

— On the Rails —

Kino and Hermes were riding through a thick forest of gigantic trees. Kino tells Hermes why she doesn't like traversing forests. More than the threat of falling bugs, Kino is wary of losing her sense of direction, and uncomfortable that the sun cannot be seen behind the thick canopy of leaves and branches. Kino checks her compass and confirms the direction that ought to rid them of the woods and show them a real road. She checks her luggage and proceeds to the north. Kino is miffed off by the fact that she had to stop every few minutes to make sure that they're heading the right way. And after stopping and checking the compass for the 108th time, they finally get a glimpse of the exit to the forest.

But no road awaits them. Instead there are tracks of an old railway headed due west. They continue on this path overgrown with grass, relieved that they need not worry about losing their direction. In the middle of the day, Hermes spots a lone man crouched on the rails, doing something. They approach the short, old man with a greeting. When the old man stands up to return their greeting, they notice that the tracks behind him are cleared of grass and gleaming under the sun like new. To their disbelief, the old man confirms that he did the work

all by himself, and that he has been doing it for about fifty years. A railroad company hired him when he was only eighteen and told him to polish the old tracks that might be used again in the future. Having received no orders to stop, he continued his work without going home to his wife and children. Finally, the old man asks Kino,

"Where are you headed, traveler?"

The next day, Kino and Hermes continues on the rails with relatively more ease than the day before, thanks to the old man clearing it of grass. When it was just time for Kino to think of lunch, she sees the second man. Like the day before, they approach the man with a greeting, which is returned by the thin old man holding a long rod . What they see behind the man surprises them. The rails are gone. When asked, the old man tells them that his job is to remove the rails, and that he has been doing it for about fifty years. The railroad company hired him when he was sixteen, and he never came home to his five little brothers ever since. Kino notes that the rails are too clean for something not used for a long time, and the old man says that it only made his job easier. Finally, he asks Kino the same question as the old man from the day before.

The next day, Kino and Hermes trudges through the gravel path, their advance made more difficult by the poor traction with the stony road as well as the scattered rails, ties, and spikes on the way. When Hermes is about to request for a break, the two of them glimpses the third man. He was sitting on top of the gravel, resting. He waves to Kino and Hermes as he saw them. They greet the old, but well-built man and notice the view behind him. There are rails again. The old man tells them that he has been doing the job of fixing the tracks for about fifty years, a figure that no longer surprised Kino and Hermes . The railroad company hired him when he was fifteen, and he has never returned home to his sick parents. Hermes tells him to keep up the work, and as they turn to leave, the man asks the same question that has been asked twice before.

Chapter 4: Colosseum —Avengers—

(Anime Reference: Episodes 6-7)

Chapter Four
"Colosseum"
— Avengers —

Kino and Hermes were running along the banks of a river in a forest. The road is in great condition, but Kino was riding Hermes at top gear, paying no heed to the motorrad's protests. She only slows down after sending the motorrad flying down a gentle slope. She apologizes, but not before getting a lecture from Hermes. Kino reasons that failing to test one's limits weakens one's skills. Soon after, they spot their destination.

Upon entering the country, Kino finds herself automatically entered into a contest as per the country's rules. Refusing it is seen as cowardice, and would land one into lifetime servitude or death. Right after admission, the guard gives her the number 24, her contestant number, and explains the rules. The contest held once every three months makes the participants contend for the right to become a citizen. The contest runs for three days, with two fights each on the first two days, and the final round on the last day. The contestants are free to use any weapon, but are not allowed to watch the matches of their opponents. One can surrender, but only if their opponent accepts. If not, the one who gets incapacitated (most of the time, dead) first loses. Those who refuse to fight become slaves and those who try to escape get executed. The last person standing receives a

medal from the king, and gets to make a new rule, as long as it doesn't contradict existing ones.

Kino asks further and finds out that the contest started seven years ago, when their current king ascended the throne and made the country more 'exciting'. Those who wanted the glorious title of a citizen are made to kill each other. Finally she learns that there are rare travelers like her who join the contest unwillingly. There was a case wherein a couple got to fight each other on the first round. The husband accepted the wife's surrender, but ended up getting killed in the next round. The guards found the story hilarious. Hermes observes that Kino becomes uncharacteristically angry. She asks that she be led to the contest, to the surprise of the guards. One guard jeers at her intent to participate, at which point Kino reveals her two persuaders and demands once more to be taken to the contest.

They make their way through the streets escorted by the guards, witnessing the terrible state the country is in. After a while, they reach the Coliseum, an elliptical structure that Hermes finds tasteless. They are led to their quarters, a room that can aptly be called a prison cell. While Kino prepares her persuaders, Hermes suggests that she beat up her first opponent and

surrender, so they could leave the country right away. Kino tells him that she plans to do so only as a last resort. She would compete earnestly, content that it ends within the time limit of three days. Kino jokingly repeats her words that morning: one becomes weak when they don't test their limits.

Approaching the battleground, Kino observes the gaudily-dressed King and the cheering audience, all eager to witness carnage. Her first opponent is a muscular man with an iron ball and chain, who expresses disappointment that he is pitted against a mere kid. Kino first asks him two questions. First, why he joined the contest, and second, if he wanted to surrender. The man only acknowledges the first question, and swings his ball even before a trumpet signals the start of the match. The ball flies out of trajectory, shocking the man, who finds the ball's chain broken by a bullet from Canon. He immediately surrenders. Kino's opponent that evening is a young man with purple hair styled like a cockscomb. He carries no weapon, but wears a black cape and metal plates on his abdomen that looked like the scales of an armor. He makes a show of his weapons, blades that return to their master like boomerangs. Kino asks him to surrender, but the man only mocks her efforts, and attacks as soon as the trumpet sounded. At first Kino

only dodges, but when the blades start to fly from different directions, Kino lay prone to the ground, and fires at a blade heading its way back to the man. It pierces into his belly. When Kino notices more blades making their way back to their defenseless master, she shot the man's right leg, making him dodge a potentially lethal attack.

The next day, Kino wakes up at dawn and performs her morning routine before being led again to the arena. Her third opponent is a short old man who wore baggy clothing with a strange lump at the back, and carried nothing but a gilded trombone. As soon as the match starts, the old man points the trombone towards Kino. Kino soon discovers that the trombone is a flame thrower . Kino takes out Woodsman and points at the man's head , moves her aim a little, and fires. The bullet only grazes the man's cheek, but sends a fountain of purple liquid from the bulge behind him. She approaches the old man and asks him to surrender. He refuses and asks Kino to kill him, while the audience chants for his death. Kino points Canon to his face, but immediately uses its grip to knock the man unconscious.

Her fourth opponent is a beautiful, blonde young woman who has a bolt-action rifle for a weapon. The

woman tells Kino that she wanted to be a citizen to adopt an adorable boy he found in the forest near the country, much to Kino's amazement. As the fight began, Kino realizes that her opponent fires armor-piercing bullets, and jumps from one cover to another to avoid them. Kino uses fist-sized stones to attack the woman while she came closer, and asks her to surrender, stating that the rifle puts its owner at a disadvantage. The woman refuses and maintains her cover, while Kino muses how difficult it is to win without killing. Kino next attempts to drive out the woman from concealment, but is taken aback when she discovers that the rifle is transformed into a fully-automatic persuader. Kino conceals herself. This time, the woman offers Kino surrender, but attacks before she even hears her answer. Kino uses a metal door as a shield, and fires three of Woodsman's bullets to the woman's right shoulder, leading to her defeat.

The next day, Kino spends the morning reading about the country's history. Seven years ago, the previous king was assassinated by his son, who was then a prince. All of the previous king's family and supporters were killed. The prince did not kill his wife, who instead took her life out of grief. Their two sons were thrown out of the country, but rumor has it that they too were killed or imprisoned underground. When he ascended the throne,

the king started a rule marked by selfishness and decadent living. The people initially resisted, but soon got used to their lavish lifestyle and grew to love their king and his ways.

Around noon, Kino is finally called to the final match. She loads a single bullet—a modified hollow-point bullet she worked on the previous night—into Canon. Unlike the first two days, this time she takes Hermes with her to the arena. Kino faces her final opponent, a tall, trim, black-haired man who looked to be in his early twenties. He wore a green sweater and blue jeans, and carried a katana by his side. The guard beside Hermes comments that he should be worried for Kino, as this final opponent is very strong. Hermes replies that doing so would not make Kino any stronger, and adds that she's planning something that ought to worry the guard instead.

The man introduces himself as Shizu, and asks that Kino surrender. Kino asks if he really wanted to become a citizen of such a rotten country, taking him by surprise. Shizu retorts that Kino herself is earnestly competing even though she has no interest in becoming a citizen. Kino says that her reason is simply to fight. The match begins, and Kino draws out Woodsman. As Shizu approaches step by step, Kino fires two rounds,

intentionally missing. Shizu unflinchingly continues his advance. Finally when Kino aims for his right shoulder, Shizu deflects the bullet using his sword, which makes Kino utter a cry of amazement. The guard comments how Shizu defeated his opponents using this skill, and that like Kino, he reached the final round without killing anyone. When Kino has fired her eight bullet, not one hitting, Shizu asks once more that she surrender. She refuses, and Shizu charges forward. A diagonal slash upwards sends Woodsman flying from Kino's hands. Shizu immediately follows-up with an attack to Kino's shoulder, but Kino blocks it with metal wrist bands. For the third time, Shizu asks Kino to surrender and warns her that continuing would forfeit her life. Kino replies that she hasn't killed anyone in the country yet, and plans to kill one person in a flashy manner. Shizu charges forward, but Kino points Canon at him the moment he raises his blade. Kino tells Shizu that the contest should be for fun and not for killing, and that Shizu was too preoccupied with winning. Shizu accepts his defeat, and Kino prepares Canon, pulling down the rod under its barrel, while the audience chants for the kill. Kino gives Shizu a clue to her plan *(Who's behind you?)*, and shouts at him to bend down as she fires. The bullet flies straight towards the private box where the King is watching and enters the King's head through his mouth, making it

explode.

Kino gets up from being thrown back by the force of the shot and collects her weapons. She waits for the audience to absorb what just occurred, then steps forward and announces her victory.

"Everyone! It is unfortunate, but a stray bullet took the king's life! I share your grief! But as the winner of this contest, I hereby proclaim a new rule! A land without a ruler will be in turmoil! Therefore, I reserve the right to choose our new king! From here on, the entire country shall become the stage! Let everyone contend for the throne, and let the victor be hailed king! Those who choose not to fight shall revoke their citizenship upon leaving the country! This is the new rule!"

Silence takes over the crowd, but chaos ultimately ensues. Kino leaves in a hurry, accidentally stepping on Shizu's shoulder on the way. Amidst the ensuing chaos, Shizu climbs up to the private box and greets the king's corpse a 'long time no see.'

Kino and Hermes ride inside the forest and stop when they come across a beautiful lake. Hermes breaks the silence, asking if Kino remembers meeting a young

couple in a carriage who was planning to visit a wonderful country. And that some time after, they met the wife alone, who recommended that they visit the country. Kino confirms the memory. When they are about to leave, Hermes hears the engine of a buggy. Indeed, a dune buggy carrying Shizu and a big white dog appears from the forest. Shizu alights and greets Kino, and then thanks her for killing the king, his father. Kino says nothing while Hermes exclaims upon realizing that Shizu was a prince. Shizu says that he had planned to win and kill the king during the awarding ceremony, but Kino ended up doing the deed for him. Kino tells him that revenge is foolish. He agrees, and they both fall into silence.

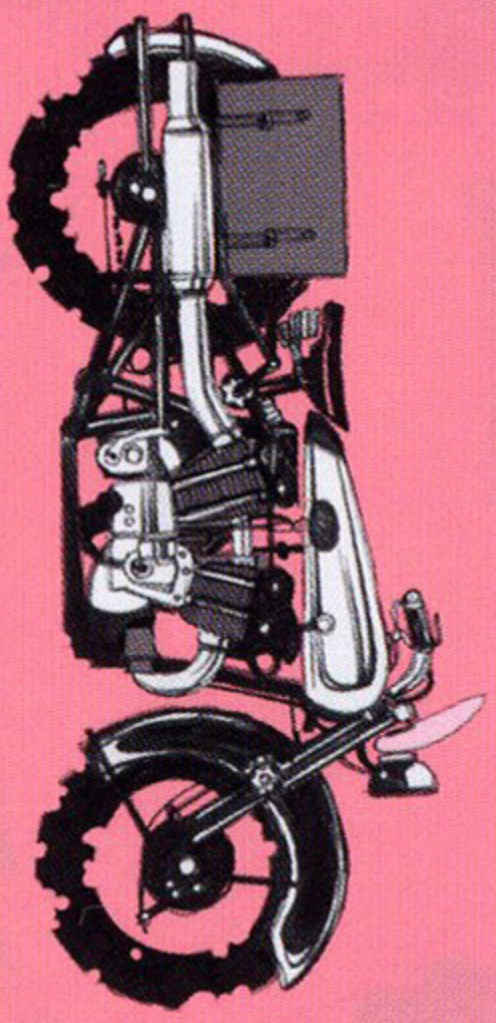
When asked about his plans, Shizu answers that he would wander for a while until he finds something he wants to do. They are to head north, since they are used to cold climates. The dog expresses his agreement with human words, much to Hermes' disbelief. The dog accuses Hermes of being arrogant for a mere motorrad. The two let insults fly at each other until Kino and Shizu stop their bickering. The dog introduces himself to Kino as Riku, and thanks her for saving Shizu's life. Kino pets Riku upon receiving permission from Shizu. While doing so, Kino notices something beneath the passenger seat,

and pulls out the crown the king was wearing only a while ago. Shizu tells her that he wanted it as a memento of his grandfather. Kino asks him why he wouldn't take the throne, and Shizu answers that a person who considered killing his own father doesn't deserve to be king. Kino puts the crown on Shizu's head.

Shizu invites Kino to head north together. Kino declines his offer, saying that there is a place she has to visit, and because she was told not to go with unfamiliar men. Shizu becomes puzzled, and his face shows surprise for a moment when Riku whispers something to him. Kino finally leaves, while Shizu remains beside the lake, looking in the direction of his home country beyond the forest.

Chapter 5: Land of Adults —Natural Rights—

(Anime Reference: Episode 4)



Chapter Five

"Land of Adults"

— Natural Rights —

The story begins with the narration of a little girl.

"My encounter with a traveler named Kino happened while I was still living in my country of birth, when I was only eleven years old. The truth is I no longer remember what they called me back then. I could only faintly recall that it was the name of some flower, and that if you change its pronunciation a little, it turns into a nasty insult. That's because I was often teased with it. "

One day, a traveler called Kino arrived in this little girl 's country. The guards hesitated to let him in, so he spent some time standing at the gates, being made fun of. When he finally received permission, he approached the girl. She describes the traveler as very tall and thin. The man had to stoop to talk to her, even though she was the tallest among her peers. The man introduces himself as Kino, and asks her name. She tells him her name (xxxxx), at the same time thinking that 'Kino' is a good name. Kino inquires where he could find an inexpensive hotel with a shower. The little girl recommends their inn, and guides Kino to her place. The girl's father attends to the

traveler while she returns to her room, where a piece of paper with the words 'Three days left' is plastered on the wall.

The next day, the girl wakes up around noon. No one woke her up because it's her 'last week'. The paper on her wall now reads 'Two days left.' She goes out to the backyard upon hearing a noise from there, and finds Kino crouched beside a scrap heap while pounding on a tire—that of a motorrad. When asked what he is doing, Kino replies that he's 'curing' the motorrad. The girl watches him for a while before getting hungry and fetching herself something to eat. When she returns, the motorrad is already half-cured. Kino tells her that it is exactly like a model he used to ride in, and that it won't take long before it gets to move around. Intrigued, the girl asks what he meant. Kino explains that the motorrad cannot move by itself, and that someone has to form a contract with it: The motorrad shall provide speed and the rider shall provide balance, a promise to help each other. Kino says that he will ask the motorrad once he's fully cured. After a while, the girl brings Kino a cup of tea. He asks her for a good name for the motorrad, and she suggests naming the motorrad after Kino's old ' friend', Hermes.

While Kino busies himself with curing the motorrad, the girl asks him what he does for a living. Kino was a little confused, so the girl adds that since he's an adult, he must have some sort of job. Kino answers that his job is to travel. The girl probes further, asking whether traveling involves unpleasant things. Kino answers that it does, but that he enjoys himself most of the time. With this, the girl concludes that traveling is not a job. She explains that a job is something one does to survive, and that it is not supposed to be fun. Finally, she tells him that she would be having an operation the day after tomorrow to turn into an adult. Seeing that Kino became more confused than ever, she explains how things worked in her country.

In this country, all people over twelve years of age are adults, and the rest, children. Adults are people who worked for a living. While children could do all they want, adults had to work to survive. Their jobs are of utmost importance, and they have to do them even if they did not want to or did not think it was the right thing to do. And so, when children turn twelve, they undergo an operation to turn into perfect adults—people that can do anything, even the things that they hated. And the week before a child's operation is called the 'last week'. During this time, for undisclosed reasons, no

citizen is allowed to initiate any form of interaction with the child.

After the explanation, Kino comments that it is a horrible system. The girl asks why he thinks so. Kino questions whether being a 'perfect adult' only meant doing things that one hates, and if anyone gets to enjoy life that way. The little girl asks Kino if he's an adult or a child. Kino says that by the country's definition, he's neither. He's simply a man named Kino, doing what he likes—traveling. Kino asks the girl what she likes to do, and the girl answers that she loves to sing. Kino says that he too, likes to sing though he's bad at it, and proceeds to give a demonstration. The girl then sings her favorite song, a slow yet lively melody. Kino praises her, saying that she is the best he has ever heard, and suggests that she becomes a singer. The little girl tells him that she can't become a singer because her parents are not singers, and adds that it is only natural for parents to give birth to children in order to have someone take over their work. That night, the girl ponders over Kino's words. She always thought that liking or hating something is a freedom only children had the right to have. She decides that she wanted to be an adult on her own, and get a work that she's good at, or one that she liked, and if possible, both.

The next morning, the paper on her room reads ‘Last day’. She asks her parents (who are not allowed to talk to her, but can reply to her) if there is any other way to turn into an adult without taking the operation. Her parents become enraged. Her father accuses her of making light of the country’s efforts, and her mother demands her to apologize to everyone. People gather around them in a while, and the father shamelessly exposes to them his daughter’s foolish actions. The people start to mock the girl, and blame her mother and father for raising their child irresponsibly. The father apologizes to them and turns to his daughter, accusing her of embarrassing her parents on purpose. Soon, he realizes that Kino must be the one to give the girl the idea. He searches for him and finds him at the entrance of the hotel preparing to leave on a motorrad.

He confronts Kino and demands him to apologize. The little girl notes that her father looked like a mad dog, no different from a child getting angry over a trivial matter. Right then, a person who holds an important position in the country intervenes. He speaks to Kino and tells him that each country has its own set of customs, and that a traveler has no say in it whatsoever. Kino agrees, and says that he should leave as it looks like he was about to get killed. The person assures him that he will be safe

until he reaches the country's gates. Kino says goodbye to the little girl. The girl asks if he could stay for three more days, hoping that she could talk with Kino after her operation. But Kino replies that he only stays in any country for three days, which is long enough to learn about any place, and short enough to be able to visit many countries. When he was about to leave, the girl's father reappears holding a kitchen knife. Kino asks why, and the person he had talked to earlier tells him that it is to dispose of the girl. He adds that it was only right for parents to get rid of their products—their children—when they prove to be defective.

The girl's father charges forward with the knife, the glint of it mesmerizing the little girl. At the same time, she realizes that Kino jumps out in an attempt to stop her father. Only a little more and it would have reached her, but her father suddenly twists to the left, causing the knife to pierce into Kino's chest, all the way to his back. Kino slumps onto the ground, dead. The father claims that the knife was meant for the girl, and that Kino put himself in between. All adults around agrees with him, and declares that it was nothing but an unfortunate accident. The girl's father then proceeds to pull out the knife from Kino's corpse. The task proved onerous, so the girl's mother begins to help. Meanwhile the girl hears

a voice from behind, asking her if she knows how to ride a bicycle. She says yes, and the voice further tells her that she would die if she stays. The girl says that it didn't matter, as she would rather die than turn into a 'proper adult' like them. But if given a chance, she wanted to live . The voice gives her a third choice: to run away. At the same time, her parents successfully pull out the knife. As her father makes a dash for her, she straddles the motorrad and launches off, following the voice's instructions.

She rides past the gates and sees the outside of the country for the first time in her life. She continues to ride, only being careful not to fall down. She rode in tears for some time until the voice calls out to her to stop. With the voice's instructions, she tries to stop the motorrad and finds it different from a bicycle. She topples over along with it. The voice angrily demands for her name (that is, the name of the one who let him fall over). The girl did not hear, distracted by her surroundings—a field of crimson flowers. She recalls the events that have just transpired, and unconsciously calls out Kino's name. The voice asks her to raise him up, and only then did she realize that the voice belongs to the motorrad. She did as the motorrad requested, and once upright, the motorrad thanks her, especially for riding him out of the country.

She thanks the motorrad as well, and realizes that he called her ‘Kino’.

She considers telling him her name, but realizes that the name belonged to someone who used to live without worries in her home country, believing that an operation is needed to become a ‘proper adult’. But as that girl no longer exists, she reaffirms that her name is Kino. The motorrad then asks for his name. Recalling the conversation the previous day, she tells him that his name is Hermes.

After this, the girl’s narration goes on to say that upon trying to get to a nearby country, she and Hermes ends up getting lost in a forest. There she meets by accident an old person who will teach her many things, and to whom she will be sincerely indebted to.

Chapter 6: A Peaceful Country —Mother’s Love—

(Anime Reference: Episode 12)

Chapter Six

"A Peaceful Country"

— Mother's Love —

Kino and Hermes were riding through a wilderness on a road demarcated only by metal drums. On the way, they see piles of human corpses transformed into mummies due to the cold, dry weather. Hermes jokingly suggests that the corpses are preserved meat that the country they're heading to uses as food, and that they would turn Kino into one.

Around noon, the walls of the next country came into view. They soon read the words 'Welcome to Veldelval' in front of its gate. Kino requests a three-day stay for rest and sightseeing. The guard asks Kino if she possesses any persuaders. To his amazement, Kino shows him Woodsman and Canon. Hermes adds that Kino is a 4th rank black belt. The guard assures her however that she will have no need for her weapons inside the country. Upon entry, Kino finds a peaceful country with happy inhabitants. With the help of the welcoming citizens, she is able to find a hotel that suits her needs.

While sightseeing around the country, not a few residents recommended the history museum and its knowledgeable curator. They decide to visit the museum—an old building with an ethnic feel to it—that stood just beside their hotel. The curator, an old yet trim

old woman, welcomes Kino and Hermes. The museum's design was very well thought out, and the exhibits were of high quality. Kino and Hermes view with enthusiasm the exhibits that showed the country's growth from its early settlement to its technological advancements. Soon they reach the part about modern history, where all exhibits are connected to war.

It appears that this country had been in intermittent conflict with a neighboring country for a long time. Being of different race, language, religion, lifestyle, and all else, one viewed the other as an enemy. The two countries tried countless of times, but never succeeded in destroying each other. Wars that exhausted lives and resources broke between them for 192 years, with no side ever gaining a clear victory over the other. Kino observes that the exhibits relating to war only covers up to 15 years before the present, and notes that this country was the most peaceful and stable place she had been in a long time. She asks what happened 15 years ago that put an end to the war. The curator answers that the time left is not enough to explain, and instead invites them to see the answer for themselves the next day.

During breakfast the next morning, Kino notices clamor outside and Hermes observes hovees (hovercrafts

) going back and forth the streets. When they arrive at the museum, the curator introduces them to a young soldier, who is to serve as their guide for that day's tour. They head to the plaza at the country center and see rows of gray hovercrafts installed with fully-automatic belt-fed persuaders. They are ushered into a hovee for spectators. Soon the group of hovees departs for the wasteland, accompanied by the cheers of the citizens.

The hovees stop after passing four mountains. After a while, Kino sees another group of similarly-armed hovees approach from the other side. Kino notes that the soldiers from the other group wore kilts, completely different from the uniform that the Veldelvalian soldiers wore. Their guide tells them that the other group represents Relsumia—the country that Veldelval had been in war in for the past two centuries. He adds that the [war] they will engage in that day is different from the old wars, and will not cause casualties on either side.

A little before noon, the two groups lined up neatly in front of each other. A special hovee positioned itself in the middle of the two rows and a priest-like man on board gave a speech, proclaiming the start of the 185th Relsumia-Veldelval war. The special hovee flies away, and the rows of hovees as well as the hovee carrying

Kino and Hermes follows it to an oasis beyond a hill. There they see a big village with simple houses made of mud. The people visible in it wore simple clothing and used simple tools. The soldier explains that they are the Tatata, a tribe native to the area. The special hovee flies north-south across the village and draws a line of red powder that divided it into east and west portions, assigning the former to Veldelval, and the latter to Relsumia.

On signal, the two groups of hovees begin rushing into the village and open fire at all Tatatans on sight. Those that fled into their houses are killed by the weak walls that crumbled from the barrage of bullets. All those within reach, men, women and children alike, were not spared. The young soldier invites Kino to fly lower to get a better view but Kino refuses, leading the soldier to infer that Kino is probably wary of stray bullets. The onslaught continues, encompassing the forest and the lake delineated by the red powder. Those that fled outside the village are not chased; the soldiers chose to concentrate on killing everyone left inside, including those that play dead.

It is almost noon when the signal to stop sounded, at which point no Tatatan is left moving. ‘Counters’

descended into the village, special hovees that will collect and weigh the dead bodies. The side with the heavier kill wins. While waiting for the results, soldiers from both sides mingled with each other, and one soldier that was wounded in the leg by a Tatatan received a badge amidst the applause of his companions. In a while, the counters return carrying piles of corpses, and Veldelval is announced to be the victor of the [war]. Meanwhile, Kino and Hermes find out that the dead bodies are thrown to the east of Veldelval, solving the mystery of the mummified bodies.

Just as the young soldier told them, everyone in the country are drunk in celebration come evening. Kino buys as much portable rations as Hermes could carry to take advantage of the discount. The next day, Kino prepares her luggage and eats her old portable rations for breakfast. She wakes Hermes and heads to the history museum early in the morning, where the curator welcomes them and gives them free admission to the museum in lieu of the previous day's victory.

The curator confirms if Kino and Hermes are able to observe the [war]. Kino nonchalantly replies, saying that the spectacle they witnessed the day before looked nothing more than a massacre. The curator agrees, saying

that it was indeed their new version of war. She shows Kino a live documentary of the battlefield during the old war, where a soldier, the curator's husband, loses his upper body. The curator goes on to relate her experiences . She had four sons, all of which she lost to the war one after another. Because of this, she gained some degree of reputation among her countrymen, and used it to appeal for the cessation of the war.

Since ending the war entirely was not possible, she thought of a realistic alternative: that the Tatata serve as substitutes for soldiers, and their massacre be made into a contest. This way, the competitiveness, hostility, and ruthlessness that human beings naturally possess can be released without casualties from either side. By coincidence, the same idea was brought up by another woman from Relsumia. Like the curator, this woman has lost all of her children to war. Their idea was tested, approved and has been in effect for the past 15 years. Since then, both countries enjoyed peace and prosperity. A new age was born, a time when no mother would ever fear burying her child with her own hands. Kino asks about the interests of the Tatatans, who surely have their own lives and families. The curator answers.

"Yes, it is just as you say. But peace is not free. Peace is built upon sacrifices. A long time ago, that sacrifice was our beloved children; young soldiers sent to the battlefields to die in defense of their country. But now it' s different. The Tatata cannot oppose us. Our children need not die on the battlefields anymore. And that is a wonderful thing. If we do not sacrifice the Tatata, the two countries shall go into war once again, and the casualties will be incomparable to the number of Tatata that are killed now. Sacrifices are necessary for peace. And we shall not allow our children to become sacrifices. If preserving this peace calls for the death of the Tatata, then so be it."

Kino tells the curator that she doesn't know whether the new [war] is right or not. The curator answers that she will understand someday when she's older, when she feels a life growing inside her. Kino says nothing.

After a grand farewell from the citizens, Kino and Hermes ride away into the plains. Eventually, Kino notices something from afar and soon recognizes it to be a group of about twenty people from the Tatata tribe. Robust young men blocked the way, carrying long rods and big hatchets. There are also women, children, and

elderly among them. Kino alights from Hermes and one youth approaches and tells her that she will be brought to the village to be killed brutally in front of everyone. When asked why, the youth tells her that it is to satisfy their thirst for revenge. They hated the two countries for slaughtering them meaninglessly, but as they have no means of fighting them, they use passers-by as substitute for their enemy, and kill them to relieve their resentment, if only a little.

Kino tells him that she sympathizes with them, but that she has no intention to die, and turns back to Hermes to leave. The young man attacks her, but Kino quickly pulls out Canon and shoots the man, killing him. Still clutching Canon, she watches as the rest of the people scampered away out of sight. Hermes asks if they are to bury the man but Kino says that his fellow Tatatans will come back to bury him, something that they cannot do for their slaughtered loved ones. They ride away, leaving the man's corpse amidst the cloud of dust.

Epilogue: In the Forest · a —Lost in the Forest · a —

(Anime Reference: None)

Prologue
“In the Forest · b”
— Lost in the Forest · b —
Epilogue
“In the Forest · a”
— Lost in the Forest · a —

Kino and Hermes spend the night under a tree, beside a dying campfire. Hermes suddenly asks Kino (who had her eyes closed in apparent sleep) a question. Hermes explains that motorrads like him are happiest when they move around, and wonders what prods humans like Kino to go on journeys.

Kino answers that it is simply because they want to go to new places, see new things, eat new kinds of food, meet new people, and so on. But Kino muses that the reason may be more complicated than this.

So Hermes asks Kino why she continues her journey, seeing that there are plenty of reasons for her to stop: getting herself almost killed many times, encountering cruel and painful things, and so on. Even though she has no home to return to, she can settle down anywhere and make a living with her skill in using persuaders. Hermes adds that she can even go home to Master.

Kino agrees with Hermes. So Hermes asks once more,

"Why do you continue your journey?"

Kino gets up and kills the remaining flames of the campfire.